

THIENSVILLE VILLAGE HALL
101 Green Bay Road
Thiensville
Ozaukee County
Wisconsin

HABS No. WI-307

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Rocky Mountain Regional Office
Department of the Interior
P.O. Box 25287
Denver, Colorado 80225

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

THIENSVILLE VILLAGE HALL

Location: 101 Green Bay Road; Thiensville, Ozaukee County, Wisconsin; Lot 1, Block 3, Assessor's Plat to the Village of Thiensville, Ozaukee County, Wisconsin:

All that part of the SW 1/4 of the Northwest 1/4 Section 23, Township 9 North, Range 21 East bounded as follows: on the West by Highway 57; on the South by the Green Bay Road; on the East by Pigeon Creek; and on the North by a parcel of land now owned by Martin Blank.

Commencing at an iron stake marking where the North line of the Green Bay Road intersects the East line of the Cedarburg Plank Road and running from there North 76 degrees East 85 feet to the center of the Pigeon Creek, thence along the center of said Creek North 5 degrees West 30 feet thence West 80 feet to the East line of the Cedarburg Plank Road, thence along said Plank Road South 50 feet to the place of beginning and being a part of the North West fractional Quarter of Section No. Twenty-three (25), Township No. Nine (9), North of range No. Twenty-one (21) East.

Present Owner: Elizabeth Johnson
149 Green Bay Road
Thiensville, Wisconsin 53092

Present Use: The building is presently vacant and used for storage. The future use of the building is restricted by deed and limited to occasional commercial sales. There are no plans to utilize the building for anything but storage.

Significance: The Thiensville Village Hall is of local historical significance as an important element of the Thiensville Historic District. The district is historically significant as the principal commercial district of the Village of Thiensville, and for its association with the Bublitz family who were instrumental in the development and growth of the village. As a part of the district, the village hall was the center of village government for sixty years and is associated with the growth and development of the Village of Thiensville.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. PHYSICAL HISTORY

1. Date of Erection: 1914¹
2. Architect: Byron S. Scheiderer was an Architect who had an office on Grand Avenue in Milwaukee during the early 1900's.
3. Original and Subsequent Owners: Village of Thiensville. Elizabeth Johnson, 149 Green Bay Road, Thiensville, Wisconsin 53092
4. Builders, Contractors, Suppliers: John Vollmar² was a builder from Cedarburg who was awarded the contract to build the Village Hall for a price of \$4,380.00.

B. HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Treaties with the Menominee and Pottawotomie Indians opened the area known as Thiensville to settlement in

¹ Marie Anzia, History of Thiensville, (Cedarburg, WI: The News Graphic, Inc., 1976), 74.

² Ibid., 56, 74.

1833. Land sales followed these treaties, along with the opening of the Green Bay Road in 1836. As in most parts of Wisconsin, the first settlers were largely from New England, followed by German and Irish immigrants. The most prominent of these was Joachim Heinrich Thien. Thien was a wealthy immigrant of Saxony, Germany. He and his wife came from the small City of Milwaukee via a farm wagon to a little Indian Village called "Mequon-Sippi" or "Pigeon River". Thien purchased land east of Pigeon Creek overlooking the Milwaukee River. In 1842 he laid out a village plat on this land and erected a gristmill. When the Town of Mequon incorporated in 1846, his residence was the site of the first town meeting.³

While Thien's village did not immediately materialize, the settlement did become a flour and saw milling center of the German farming community of Mequon. It also served as a stop on the Green Bay-Milwaukee stage line, prompting the construction of several hotels. Officially recognized as "Thiensville" in 1843, the settlement gained popularity among middle-class Milwaukee Germans as a resort community. At the turn of the century, rail connections and interurban service encouraged a marked period of growth and development. Not long afterwards, the Thiensville State Bank was incorporated, the Gilbert Shoe Company opened, and various commercial buildings were constructed by John Bublitz and his sons, creating a distinct commercial district along Main Street.⁴

³Ibid., 3,14.

⁴Ibid., 4-13, 104-106.

When Thiensville incorporated in 1910, the Bublitz family played a role in its early governance. The Bublitzs were early settlers of the Mequon Township. John Bublitz was proprietor of a steam saw mill and was a lumber processor, farmer and stock breeder. In 1896 he built a general store which was later run by his sons Otto & Oscar. Otto was one of five men to petition for the incorporation of Thiensville. Oscar Bublitz served as village treasurer, while Otto, his brother, served on both the village board and the committee that studied the construction of a village hall. In 1913 the Fire Engine Company donated the land and contributed \$1,000 towards the cost of construction. Completed in 1914 the village hall housed the fire department and jail facility on the first floor and the village offices on the second.⁵

From 1914 to 1974 nearly all village business was conducted in this building, the fire department relocating in 1959. Street improvements, sewer construction, and standing water problems were among the chief concerns of early boards, along with the installation of street lights and cement curbing. Eventually village concerns graduated to the reorganization of the fire department, mutual assistance agreements with the City of Mequon, and the construction of a sewage treatment plant. The building was vacated after construction of a new municipal center in 1974.⁶

⁵ Ibid., 4-5, 54-56.

⁶ Ibid., 72-81.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. GENERAL STATEMENT

1. Architectural Character: The Thiensville Village Hall is a two-story vernacular public building with bearing walls of Milwaukee "Cream City" brick which also supports a 60-foot hose drying tower situated on the southwest corner.⁷ The tower includes an open wooden belfry, a low-pitched overhanging roof, and a flag pole which suggest an Italianate influence in the design. Except for a small boiler pit in the northwest corner, the first floor is a slab-on-grade with no basement. The foundation walls which are partially visible above grade, are made of concrete. Condition of the building walls is generally very good, except for a small area of spalled brick on the north exterior side. There is very little cracking

⁷ Barbara Wyatt, ed., "Architecture", Cultural Resource Management in Wisconsin: Volume 2: A Manual for Historic Preservation (Madison: Historic Preservation Division State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1986), 10. The cream-colored brick produced primarily in the Milwaukee vicinity had the most distinctive visual effect on the State of Wisconsin. The Lacustrine deposits located almost exclusively in narrow strips along Lake Michigan were unusually deep. The buff or cream tone of brick made from the clay is a result of its relatively high proportion of calcium and magnesium. Brick manufactured in Milwaukee became so popular during the nineteenth century that the city was nicknamed "cream city".

and no evidence of settlement or shifting of walls.⁸
On the front facade above the second floor windows is a rectangular tablet that reads THIENSVILLE VILLAGE HALL & F.D.

2. Condition of Fabric: Good

B. DESCRIPTION OF EXTERIOR

1. Overall Dimensions: 50 feet x 31 feet

2. Foundations: The east concrete foundation wall is apparently 11.5 feet below grade, at least at the southeast corner of the building. There appears to be a concrete spread footing or pile cap at that depth.⁹

3. Walls: Yellow Milwaukee "Cream City" brick with a stretcher bond.

⁸ "Structural Analysis of Old Fire Station/Village Hall, Thiensville, WI.," Computerized Structural Design, (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: WisDOT, Project file, ID 2697-02-00, June 14, 1989), 1, photocopied.

⁹ As part of the structural analysis, an attempt was made to determine the depth of the foundation walls. An area next to the foundation was excavated by hand. At a depth of five feet, water was encountered. Therefore, probing with a steel rod was conducted. Computerized Structural Design, "Structural Analysis of Old Fire Station/Village Hall, Thiensville, WI" (Milwaukee, Wisconsin, June 14, 1989), Project file, WisDOT ID 2697-02-00, 2, Photocopied.

4. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors: Entrances to the building are: a single wooden door at the base of the tower, an overhead wooden vehicular door on the front facade, and through a single wooden door on the south facade.

b. Windows and shutters: The fenestration is functional and consists of segmentally arched windows with double-hung, single-paned sash.

5. Roof: The roof form is flat with a stepped parapet. The roofing material is asphalt.

C. DESCRIPTION OF INTERIOR

1. Floor Plans: The interior includes a garage located in the front northwest corner of the building, and an office which is situated between a lavatory in the southeast corner and a boiler room located in the northeast corner at the rear of the first floor. The hose drying tower occupies the southwest corner of the building. The principal staircase is located at the rear of the garage with access from the south facade entry. The second floor stairhall was originally flanked by two large rooms, but these were divided into six smaller rooms at a later date.

2. Stairways: The staircase to the second floor is located off the southern entry. The treads, risers, and handrail are wooden.

3. Flooring: The flooring on the first floor is concrete in the garage and linoleum tile in the office and lavatory. All flooring on the second floor is linoleum tile.
4. Wall and Ceiling Finish: The walls and ceilings are lath and plaster.
5. Openings: The wooden doorways and windows are similar in size and proportion. The doorways are 80 inches by 36 inches. The windows are 64 inches by 28 inches and 36 inches by 24 inches. The wooden garage door measures 148 inches by 106 inches.
6. Interior Trim: The trim appears to be painted pine.
7. Hardware: The utilitarian hardware appears to be original.
8. Mechanical and Electrical Equipment: The heating, lighting, and plumbing systems appear to be original.

D. SITE

The building is located on the northeast corner of Main Street and Green Bay Road in the center of the central business district. The lot backs onto Pigeon Creek and does not include outbuildings or any historic landscape design.

PART III. SOURCES OF PROJECT INFORMATION

A. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Prepared By: Ruekert & Mielke, Inc.
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